

Pediatric Primary Care Relief Program

Program Guidance

Program Overview

On June 4, 2020, Governor Raimondo announced that the state would be providing financial relief payments to pediatric primary care providers. These one-time grant payments are meant to support system resiliency and response to public health concerns brought on by COVID-19 related disruptions in primary care (e.g., drastic reductions in immunization rates), as well as to offset costs of business interruption and expenses incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Primary care is central to our healthcare system and serves as the lynchpin of many health system reform efforts in Rhode Island and nation-wide. As the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency unfolded, primary care providers experienced significant reductions in utilization; preliminary estimates show reductions of about 50% in Medicaid claims. Given the importance of pediatric primary care to our health system, EOHHS and OHIC believe it necessary to provide support to providers, while ensuring that funds administered through this program are not duplicative of funds received through any other federal program, including other reimbursements authorized through the CARES Act.

It is a top priority of the administration to ensure that pediatric primary care providers are able to remain solvent following business interruptions due to COVID-19, such that as the state reopens, children and families do not experience barriers to access. Pediatric primary care has been deferred for many families because of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, resulting in a 33% reduction in vaccines administered and a 42% reduction in lead screening between March and May of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. It is critical now more than ever that the pediatric primary care system is equipped to resume delivering vital, preventive healthcare services. Delayed vaccinations have been an unfortunate and nationally documented second-order effect of the public health emergency. As such, distribution of these funds will be tied to expectations that pediatric providers will take targeted actions to ensure patients are caught up on immunizations.

Qualifying Providers

Payments through the Pediatric Primary Care Relief Program will be made available to pediatric practices, family medicine practices, or any other such primary care practice that provides primary care to children by an MD, DO, PA, or NP with a subspecialty in pediatrics or family medicine. Non-FQHC practices located in Rhode Island are eligible to apply. Out-of-state practices will not be eligible to apply. Payment size will be based on the practice's panel in a manner proportional to the number of children under 18 years of age that receive primary care services from the practice.

While practices that have already received financial relief through federal assistance programs will not be disqualified from participating in the Pediatric Primary Care Relief Program, practices will be required to report on any assistance received to date related to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure there is no



duplication of funds. Such assistance may include, but is not limited to disbursements received through CARES Act Provider Relief Funds administered by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Distribution Methodology

Pediatric Primary Care Relief Program payments will be distributed to qualifying practices proportionally based on the number of active patients under 18 years of age in each clinician's pediatric panel. For the purposes of this program, active patients will be defined as those that have received care from the practice between June 1, 2018 and May 31, 2020. Payments will be subject to a cap based on available resources, and will not exceed the need demonstrated in the application.

In the application, practices must attest to a commitment to take proactive, targeted actions to bring their patients up to date with immunizations. Applicants will be instructed to submit a brief narrative (no more than 3 pages) describing the actions the practice is currently taking or planning to take to address the decline in immunization rates and catch their patients up with immunization schedules. Appropriate activities may include: participation in a state sponsored immunization learning collaborative, ACO or system of care led initiatives, or partnerships with community-based organizations or institutions.

Eligible Uses

Funds received through the Pediatric Primary Care Relief Program must be applied toward the following eligible uses:

- Payroll expenses, including: employee wages, including overtime, payroll support, or hazard pay
- New costs related to COVID-19, including: PPE, cleaning supplies, screening of patients and visitors
- Costs otherwise associated with business interruptions caused by required closures
- Expenses necessary to carry out the efforts defined in the provider's application to ensure patients are up to date with immunizations
- Other COVID-19 related expenditures

Once funds are disbursed, providers are instructed to keep financial records demonstrating that funds received through the Pediatric Primary Care Relief Program are spent in accordance with these requirements, as recipients of these funds will be subject to audit.

Administration

Qualifying providers must submit an application to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). Applications will consist of: contact information, provider billing information, electronic funds transfer information, physician FTE count, pediatric panel size, detailed financials, lost revenue due to COVID-19 and added expenses due to COVID-19. Financial reporting will use the same definitions and parameters as HHS applications for provider distributions to minimize administrative burden. Providers must also include their plan for ensuring patients are caught up on immunizations and a signed financial



agreement as attachments. Providers who are not currently enrolled in the Medicaid Fee-for-Service Program will have to email a W9 to OHHS.PediRelief@ohhs.ri.gov to complete the application process.

A PDF version of the program application, application instructions, and a blank financial agreement are available here: <http://www.eohhs.ri.gov/Initiatives/PediRelief.aspx>

Upon receiving applications, EOHHS will calculate the payment amount and make every effort to disburse payments to providers by July 31, 2020. Following EOHHS determination of grant amount, the provider will be asked to sign and return a financial agreement for the specific amount. A signed agreement by the provider will state that grant funds will be disbursed appropriately and that the provider will participate in audit functions following receipt of the payment. Failure to comply with the terms of the agreement will result in recoupment of all funds. A blank financial agreement can be found online for reference here: <http://www.eohhs.ri.gov/Initiatives/PediRelief.aspx>

Applications will be made available by Thursday July 2. EOHHS requests that all providers desiring to participate complete the online application by Thursday July 16 at 5pm. Applicants must submit a signed financial agreement upon submission of the application. EOHHS will return an executed financial agreement and award notification once payments are processed. Applications received after July 16 may be considered and processed subject to available funds.

Approved providers will receive the requested amount in a lump sum payment from EOHHS via directed payment through the State's Medicaid payment system. If an applicable provider is not usually paid through the Medicaid fee-for-service system, additional information will be needed in the application to support expedited enrollment within the Medicaid payment system.

For any further questions regarding this program, please email: OHHS.PediRelief@ohhs.ri.gov

To submit your application, please apply using the online application accessible at the link above. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.